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Auditor Edelen Finds New Concerns about Superintendent Contracts, Evaluations in Latest School District Special Examinations

Exams into Spending, Operations at Nine School Districts are Complete; Five More are Underway

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 10, 2013) – Auditor Adam Edelen today reiterated his call for more accountability and transparency over superintendent contracts and evaluations after three more special examinations conducted by his office found new concerns.

Exams recently conducted in Webster County, Ashland Independent and Carroll County school districts further demonstrate the need for superintendent contracts to clearly specify all benefits and compensation amounts and evaluations to be conducted in a transparent process, Auditor Edelen said. The findings – while not as egregious – share some similarities to those in exams the Auditor’s office conducted in Mason County and Dayton Independent.

“All five exams point to the need for more oversight and transparency over superintendent contracts and evaluations,” Auditor Edelen said. “How else can taxpayers be confident their dollars are being spent to benefit our kids?”



In Webster County, an exam found that the superintendent’s contract lacked specific detail regarding benefits for vacation and sick leave. If a superintendent’s use of leave time isn’t monitored, there is an increased risk that large payouts will result when the superintendent leaves the district – as was the case at Dayton Independent. In Dayton, an examination by the Auditor’s office found the former superintendent was paid nearly \$50,000 more than he should have received for leave time. The Webster County exam also found that the superintendent’s annual evaluation was not consistently performed or reported according to his contract, district policy and state statute. This was similar to a finding in Dayton Independent and on the heels of a 2010 law passed by the General Assembly that clarified the evaluation process for school superintendents.

In Carroll County, auditors found that payment for the superintendent to participate in an Executive Doctoral Program – a benefit worth more than \$35,000 – was not included as a specific provision within the superintendent’s contract. In addition, the final cost for the program exceeded the Board-approved amount by more than \$3,000. Further, the board did not enact a contract provision that would prevent the superintendent from leaving district employment immediately upon receiving the doctoral degree without reimbursing the district for the cost of the program.

Both Dayton Independent and Mason County exams found instances of superintendents receiving benefits that were not clearly spelled out in contracts, making it difficult for the public and board members to understand the total value of the compensation package.

At Ashland Independent, auditors found that the superintendent’s salary exceeded base contract and approved amounts.

Auditor Edelen’s office also has wrapped up special examinations at Pike County and Metcalfe County school districts.

Auditor Edelen’s office has completed special examinations at nine public school districts in Kentucky. Five more exams are underway, including one at Jefferson County Public Schools.

All completed school district examinations can be found on the Auditor’s website.

The Kentucky Department of Education in March accepted Auditor Edelen’s recommendation to make superintendent contracts, benefits and evaluations more transparent. Districts have until Aug. 31 to submit contract and benefit information to KDE for posting on its website. Superintendent salaries are already available on the KDE website.

In an effort to increase transparency and accountability, KDE is requiring local boards of education to include in their superintendent evaluation specific performance measures tied to the district’s academic progress, fiscal well-being, resource management and ethics. Districts will have to document a discussion of these issues with the superintendent in an open meeting and submit evidence and assurances to the department by Dec. 20. It will be up to each district to post the evaluation on its website or make it available to the public in another way.

“My office receives new concerns and allegations about spending and operations at our public schools on a weekly basis,” Auditor Edelen said. “As long as that is the case, I will continue making these examinations a priority. We must make sure that every dollar that goes to education counts.”

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